

The DROPKICK MURPHYS

Dropkick Murphys
Turn Up That Dial
Born & Bred Records

In good times and bad times, we turn to music. Our record collections and playlists carry us through any hardships, adversities, and trouble the world throws our way. When you press play, the pain just goes away. It's why we listen in the first place.

And that's what **Dropkick Murphys** set out to do - and definitely accomplished - on the new album ***Turn Up That Dial***. They boot in the front door of 2021 with a record that punches you square in the face and says, in the words of **Ken Casey**, "Get up, get out of those sweatpants you've been wearing for the last year...better times are ahead – LET'S F-in' GO!!"

Over the last two years, following a surgery, bassist/co-lead vocalist **Casey** stopped playing, passing bass duties to longtime friend and road crew member **Kevin Rheault**. With **Casey** off his leash and free to roam the front of the stage with co-lead vocalist **Al Barr**, a new, powerful dynamic has ignited between the two. After a couple hundred shows of the untethered duo shredding stages all over the world, their long-standing vocal trade-off explodes out of the speakers better than ever on ***Turn Up That Dial***.

Volume cranked, heads held high, smiles wide, eyes on the prize, **Dropkick Murphys** charge forward with the same spirit that brought them here in the first place...yet with a new determination and exuberance that brings both the live show and this album to the next level.

"On this record, the overall theme is the importance of music, and the bands that made us who we are," states **Casey**. "We just hope it takes people's minds off their troubles. We're so fortunate and grateful to be in the position to share a little happiness in our own way. Our gratitude levels are off the chart. 25 years ago, somebody bet me 30 bucks I couldn't form a band with three weeks' notice to open for his band. As kids, we'd never been out of New England and here we are—we've made ten records and have been all over the globe. If there's a message to this album, it's 'put your fist up and play it loud.'"

That became something of a mantra for the guys in the studio. Even before the shit hit the fan with the global pandemic, the boys wanted to "make a really fun and upbeat record," according to **Casey**. They'd just completed a marathon tour cycle behind *11 Short Stories of Pain & Glory*—which boldly stared down the opiate epidemic—and made a conscious decision to uplift. By the top of 2020, they had written and recorded a little more than half of the music for what would become ***Turn Up That Dial***.

So they hit the road in Europe armed with a raucous new single, "Smash Shit Up." The band shot two music videos the day before the final show of the tour. On Friday, February 21, 2020, the band walked onstage in front of 9,000 people at the majestic Alexandra Palace in London. All signs pointed to 2020 being maybe the most enjoyable and memorable year of the band's career yet.

We all know what happened next.

Touring ceased. Cities shut down. Way too many of our brothers and sisters lost their lives.

Hunkered down at home, **Dropkick Murphys** staved off depression by leaning on the music and leaning on each other. As they have since 1996, they began throwing down rousing anthems – songs that span the gap from punk rock ragers to melodic, Irish-inspired tunes.

The band—**Al Barr** (lead vocals), **Tim Brennan** (guitars, tin whistle, accordion, piano, vocals), **Ken Casey** (lead vocals), **Jeff DaRosa** (guitars, banjo, mandolin, vocals), **Matt Kelly** (drums, percussion, and vocals), **James Lynch** (guitars and vocals), plus touring members **Kevin Rheault** on bass and **Lee Forshner** on bagpipes – proudly uphold this tradition yet again on their tenth full-length studio album, *Turn Up That Dial* [Born & Bred Records].

“At first, we didn’t know if or when we’d ever play music again, but we found a way to do it,” states **Casey**. “It was nice to have something to work on to keep us sane and give us a little bit of hope. We also had the time to tinker and change things we probably wouldn’t have ordinarily. I wish it was under different circumstances, but the time was ultimately beneficial.”

Working out of Q Division Studios in Somerville, MA with longtime producer Ted Hutt, they recorded in shifts with two members at a time. For the final weeks of recording, Hutt ran the sessions via video conference from his studio in LA. For background vocals, the guys set up separate mics in five different rooms, so they could all simultaneously sing safely. “We were all looking at each other out the window, at least,” recalls **Casey**. “We went outside to do some vocals, but it gets a little crazy with the ambient sirens, wind, and all of that stuff,” he chuckles.

Dropkick Murphys steamrolled their way through the album with a string of anthems, starting with the title track. “Turn Up That Dial” lays bare the whole point of the collection in the first verse:

*You’re my inspiration, you got something to say
Now turn up that dial ‘til it takes me away*

...and the chorus drives the point home...

*We took on the world
With these songs in our ear
They told us to listen
But you were all we could hear*

It’s easy to imagine the band members thinking back to their teenage selves: blasting The Clash on a Walkman, feeling their favorite bands were sticking up for them more than anyone else in the world.

As **Casey** called out above, this album is fueled by those bands that captured the energy of the streets, distilled life’s complexities to raging choruses, and were constant companions.

On the other end of the spectrum, the band closes the album with a tribute to **Al**’s late father Woody Barr on the tearful “I Wish You Were Here.” *Turn Up That Dial* waves goodbye with accordion, bagpipes, and a drum march.

“**Al**’s dad was just an incredible man,” **Casey** explains. “He and **Al** had a very special bond. To watch **Al** grieve his death was heartbreaking. He persevered through it, even when we had to go back on the road, away from family. He kept his head held high. We’ve never ended an album with a slow song, but we had to end it with a tip of the cap to pay our respects to Woody and so many others. It’s a moment to stop, count our blessings, and remember those who we’ve lost, including the 500,000-plus people to this virus.”

Speaking of bagpipes, the band dedicates “L-EE-B-O-Y” to bagpiper **Lee Forshner**, who played on an instrumental version of the song, but has yet to hear the lyrics and has no idea it’s about him.

“We can’t wait to surprise him,” **Casey** grins. “Bagpipe players are unique characters in and of themselves. **Lee**’s just a great dude.”

Meanwhile, the title “Middle Finger” speaks for itself. **Barr** spits out the verses with an evil, tongue-in-cheek grin, as the track explodes into the chorus, “*I could never keep that middle finger down.*” Not one to shirk responsibility, **Casey** offers this reflection: “Thinking of my younger days, I made things a lot harder than they needed to be – and still pay for some of those mistakes now. As the lyric confirms: *‘I’ve learned from my losses / I know when I’m wrong / Still my life’s sadder than an old country song.’*”

“Mick Jones Nicked My Pudding” recounts a hilarious memory Ted Hutt shared with the band of the time The Clash guitarist swiped Ted’s dessert from the fridge of a studio in the UK. After hearing the story, the **Dropkicks** took a lunch break, and while they were gone **Casey** stayed behind and turned Hutt’s story to song in a 10-minute span. Galloping drums and a high-octane riff practically crash right into a gang chorus issuing a warning, “*Mick Jones, leave my pudding alone!*”

A newscaster introduces us to the “Queen of Suffolk County” as **Casey** recounts the exploits of a knife-toting local femme fatale advising, “*You best stay out of her way. She don’t joke, and she don’t play.*” One of the most light-hearted moments on the album, the hilarious “H.B.D.M.F.” puts the crosshairs on that one adult friend who always over-celebrates their birthday. “*It’s attention that you seek, it’s a birthDAY not a week,*” the song admonishes.

“I just have a personal disdain for people who overdo the birthday thing,” Casey laughs. “It may or may not be dedicated to a member of the band...”

A cynical love letter to Boston, “City By The Sea” sings the praises and laments the difficulties of growing up in the Hub, culminating with the heartfelt cry, “*I wanna be back where people tell it like it is, everyone remembers but nobody forgives.*”

With the crackle of a needle drop, “Good As Gold” brings us back to the album’s theme – the music that shaped the band. Here, **Casey** talks about “the act of coveting records, going record shopping, buying albums, and how pumped you felt to bring a new album home.” Where the title track honors the band’s musical heroes and the impact they had on the young **Dropkick** members, “Good As Gold” is about the albums themselves, those precious slabs of vinyl we listen to, collect, and cherish.

“It’s about the important role music has played in our lives,” **Casey** says. “The outside world may be going on. Boom, you put your headphones on, drop the needle, and nothing else matters. It’s about how much hope I’ve gotten from music, all of the inspiration, and the way it’s helped me take my frustrations out.”

For as much as everything changed in 2020, one thing didn’t. **Dropkick Murphys** still found a big way to give back. On St. Patrick’s Day 2020, just as the Covid-19 pandemic was hitting critical mass in the United States, **Dropkick Murphys** held their *Streaming Up From Boston* live stream event in lieu of their normal Boston Blowout St. Patrick’s Day celebration. To date, it’s been watched more than 13 million times across platforms, was featured on **CBS This Morning Saturday**, **CNN**, **NBC Nightly News**, **The Late Show With Stephen Colbert**, and in the **Wall Street Journal**, and raised more than \$60,000 through the band’s charitable organization, **The Claddagh Fund**.

In May 2020, they masterminded the historic *Streaming Outta Fenway* presented by Pega. Taking the infield at Fenway Park instruments in-hand, it stood out as the first-ever music event without an in-person audience at a major U.S. venue, and the first music performance directly on the infield at Fenway. Bruce Springsteen joined on the Jumbotron for a two-song “Double Play” of **DKM**’s “Rose Tattoo” and his “American Land.” Most importantly, they hauled in \$700,000-plus to benefit charities such as Boston Resiliency Fund, Feeding America®, and Habitat for Humanity, Greater Boston.

“We found that giving back is what makes everything most relevant and worth it,” **Casey** says. “When it’s all said and done, we had fun, gained a degree of popularity, paid some bills, and got to see the world. However, the charitable stuff is what we’ll hang our hat on the most. That ties it all together for us.”

That says a lot given their history...

With a celebrated discography including 2005's gold-selling *Warrior's Code* and the near double-platinum classic "I'm Shipping Up To Boston," these underdogs turned champions have quietly moved 8 million-plus units worldwide. Whether you caught a legendary gig at The Rathskeller (The Rat) under Kenmore Square, found the band by taking the T to Newbury Comics to cop *Do Or Die* in '98, discovered them in Martin Scorsese's Academy Award-winning *The Departed*, or saw 'em throw down at *Coachella* (or one of hundreds of other festivals), you've become a part of their extended family. Among many accolades, they've earned three Top 10 albums on the *Billboard* Top 200, generated half-a-billion streams, and sold out gigs on multiple continents. Not to mention, The *Signed and Sealed in Blood* standout "Rose Tattoo" graced *Loudwire's* "Top 66 Best Of The Decade Rock Songs" at #21 with a bullet. Most recently, 2017's *11 Short Stories Of Pain & Glory* (released through the band's own Born & Bred Records), bowed at #8 on the *Billboard* Top 200 and emerged as the #1 independently released album.

In the end, ***Turn Up That Dial*** is a self-fulfilling prophecy for **Dropkick Murphys**.

"We've all done plenty of lamenting, so the main goal was to keep this fun," **Casey** leaves off. "The darker the times got, the harder we fought to uplift with this music. Whatever we're potentially giving to fans, trust me, they're giving it to us tenfold. Now, turn up that fucking dial."

– Rick Florino, January 2021

Discography

Do Or Die (1997, Hellcat/Epitaph)

The Gang's All Here (1999, Hellcat/Epitaph)

Singles Collection (2000, Hellcat/Epitaph)

Sing Loud, Sing Proud! (2001, Hellcat/Epitaph)

Live On St. Patrick's Day From Boston, MA (2002, Hellcat/Epitaph)

Blackout (2003, Hellcat/Epitaph)

On The Road With the Dropkick Murphys DVD (2004, Hellcat/Epitaph)

Singles Collection: Volume II (2005, Hellcat/Epitaph)

The Warrior's Code (2005, Hellcat/Epitaph)

The Meanest Of Times (2007, Born & Bred)

Live On Lansdowne, Boston MA (2010, Born & Bred)

Going Out In Style (2011, Born & Bred)

Signed And Sealed In Blood (2013, Born & Bred)

11 Short Stories Of Pain & Glory (2017, Born & Bred)